

World's Longest Restoration?

What were you doing in 1969? Too old to remember? Too young to know? Not even born? John Bowmer can remember 1969 all too well.

Can you ever imagine a 48-year restoration project? We all know what its like. Almost all of us have done it. We start a project with enthusiasm, then those pesky things in life get in our way. You know, things like work/career, girlfriend/wife, children, education, not to mention lack of available funds.

We've all heard of 'barn finds', where people find a bit of a wreck and spend a decade restoring it. Yet very, very few of us would ever keep a car for 45 years before finishing off the restoration project we started nearly half a century before. Would you? No, didn't think so.

John Bowmer has done it! It's something I have never heard of before. Keeping a car (OK, lets call it a 'project') for so long would test the very best of marital relationships. Could you imagine your other/better half putting up with 'that' in the shed for 45 years? And then starting a three-year job to restore it? No, mine neither.

So, the world's longest restoration? Quite possibly. World's longest Morris Minor restoration? Most probably! Which ever way you look at it, John's 48-year restoration of his beloved Morris Minor MM is quite simply stunning. Other words? Try remarkable, or extraordinary, or staggering, or incredible... The adjectives go on and on but, deep down, we're all really impressed with John's perseverance and determination.

Here is John's story...

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From member 1093.



The resto process begins - John at work on his Morrie in 1970

This will be my final resto progress report on car number: 61779/6121, because it is now complete and registered on Historic plates. The culmination was having a 'Completion Party' with many long-known friends and family on 11th March 2018.

What a resto journey this has been; all of 48 years. The story starts back in December 1969 (me being 20 years old then), when my Dad saw this 2 door saloon for sale opposite Caringbah Fire Station where he was working.





like. It is now painted 'Sky View Blue', a Ford colour from 1974.

I spent three years on the engine and running gear but was then sent overseas for work. I arrived back in Australia in 1975 and my attention was somewhat diverted... Sandra and I were married in late 1989.

What with family responsibilities, then children, work, school runs and weekend sport, I never had a chance to get back to the Morris.

Then in 2015, as happens to all of us, the children leave, the bank balance starts to look healthy and we can get back to doing those things we have put off for so long - like restoring a Morris Minor!

There were no major headaches during the restoration process - but lots of small ones! Panels that didn't quite fit properly, some mechanical hiccups; nothing too big that I couldn't overcome.



The engine during restoration (above) and after (below)



The interior being worked on (above) and the final product (below)



I did buy AAY-135 for the princely sum of \$35.00. Rego was still valid until July but I returned the plates to the DMT in January 1970. From what I know, this was a 1950 CKD (completely knocked down) model, assembled at Zetland and first registered in 1951. The colour was a muddy brown that is yet to be identified and which I did not



Club members admire a job well done

The 'coming out' party was wonderful. It was a pretty good bash. Having friends and family help me celebrate after so long was really heartwarming. Some big thank you's had to be made:

Firstly, to my dear departed Dad, who welded in new steel to replace all the rust holes (there were a lot!). Thanks also to the builder for constructing the garage my Morris has been in since 1975. AND, thank you also to my very patient wife Sandra. She was one of the 'true believers' that knew I would complete it.

You may note that I am wearing an English 'flat hat' in the photo. This was a gift from my English friend who said I had to wear it whilst driving a Morris!

There was some uncertainty at the RMS as regards needing a Pink or Blue slip for Historic Rego. It turned out I needed a Blue one, maybe because there was no record of the car's previous rego in NSW. RMS apparently have no pre-1990 records.

So, after all this time, countless hours of work and dollars

spent, I now have the joy of taking it out on the road again and driving slowly.

Thanks to the Morris Minor Car Club of NSW and members who have shown interest, support and supplied parts over the last 3 years.

There were a few test runs around the block. My first big test run was about 40 miles and all went OK.

The odometer sits on about 94,000 miles, all of it done in the first 20 years of life. I look forward to adding many, many more miles.

Happy driving!
Cheers,
John

John Bowmer with his 48-year restoration project on his first MMCCNSW outing with it to Prospect

